

CORPS' PONDENT



US Army Corps
of Engineers
Portland District

*Navigation lock gate
replacement underway
at Columbia and Snake
river dams*

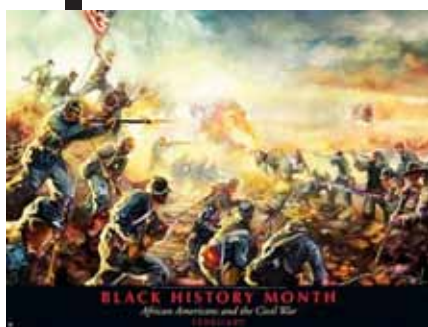
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CONTENTS



January - February 2011



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- 4 In Memoriam
- 5 Portland District honored with CFC regional award
- 6 Not just another "Groundhog Day"
- 8 District tackles huge navigation lock gate replacement project
- 10 Botanist multi-tasks to improve Willamette environment
- 12 Surfing the Internet leads to home building project in Vietnam
- 15 Retiree Spotlight
- 16 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – A Day On, Not a Day Off!

"I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people will get to the promised land."

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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Commander: Col. Steven R. Miles, P.E.
Chief, Public Affairs: Matt Rabe
Editor: Erica Jensen

E-PLAN – How you fit into our roadmap of the year ahead

“He who fails to plan, plans to fail,” spoken by Sir Winston Churchill during World War II, is a caution that I take seriously. That’s why Portland District undergoes yearly strategic planning to ensure we are fully executing our missions and goals in support of the Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Army and the Nation.

The outcome of our annual planning exercise is our Portland District Strategic Planning and Execution Plan (a.k.a. the E-Plan) which provides a roadmap to our year ahead and beyond.

The E-Plan outlines specific actions and Commander’s Priorities that we intend to execute in alignment with the Northwestern Division’s Command Implementation Plan and the USACE Campaign Plan. These actions are nested under the Corps’ four national goals, with each having further tasks that focus on specific areas of our operations – and each of those has re-occurring measurements to be sure we are on track. An example of this is our Overseas Contingency Operations program, which is an E-Plan action item that’s found under Mission Execution. The OCO program has four tasks, one of which is the Family Readiness Network which supports families of our deployees. Our progress on this and other tasks is reviewed monthly, or as needed, at either the district or regional levels.

The E-Plan is a collaboration, a living document, to which the District leadership is committed, and its successful execution relies on every employee knowing how they fit into and support our greater mission – both inside our workplace and outside within the public sector.

When asked how his job fits, Gregory Vincent, a supply technician at the Portland District U.S. Moorings warehouse said “I’m part of a team that supports both the District and Northwestern Division with materials handling, support services, stock and inventory control, product receiving and property




Col. Steven R. Miles, P.E.

disposal. Much of what we do directly supports the Corps’ capital dredges, the Essayons and Yaquina.”

Not only does Vincent know how his job connects with the daily operation and mission of the Portland District, but he also knows that it has deeper impacts on our region’s economy, demonstrated when he added, “My team’s work also indirectly impacts commerce in the northwest as the dredges keep the navigation channels open for shipping.” His work definitely relates to our Mission Execution goal.

It is so important that you know how your job fits that it is part of your annual performance plan with your objectives falling under the categories Mission, Relationships, Business Process and Workforce Development. This is intended to help you directly relate what you do to the District’s mission, and as you go about your daily job, know how you are connected to and influencing our success. If you are unsure how your job fits, refer to the District’ new E-Plan brochure mailed to you in January or ask your supervisor to help you make the connections.

The E-Plan isn’t a meaningless strategy planning document to throw on the shelf – it’s our GPS system for the year ahead, telling us where we need to go, in the most efficient fashion so that we can meet our Portland District mission and support our greater missions of the Corps, the U.S. Army and the Nation. 





In Memoriam

IN MEMORIAM

Philip G. Davis

Aug. 10, 1953 – Nov. 20, 2010

Philip G. Davis, a longtime employee in the Hydroelectric Design Center, passed away Nov. 20, 2010 after a brief illness. He was 57 years old. Davis was raised and attended primary and secondary schools in Sheridan, Ore. After high school, he moved to Portland where he earned an associate's degree in drafting in 1973 from Portland Community College and began to prepare for what would be a long and productive career with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Davis started with the Corps in 1976 as a drafting technician and ended his career 34 years later as a mechanical engineering technician, all within HDC.

He had a love of gun collecting and was a member of several gun clubs throughout the Portland area. He also had a strong interest in military planes and ships and in World War I and World War II trivia. He wrote an article entitled "The Mighty Guns of the USS Oregon," which was published in Portland's maritime newspaper, *The Scuttlebutt*. The USS Oregon was a World War I battleship that served in three wars and whose mast survives as a memorial across the street in Governor Tom McCall Waterfront Park.

Davis is survived by a brother and the Portland District, whom Phil considered his family.



Phillip L. Cole


May 30, 1922 – Dec. 16, 2010

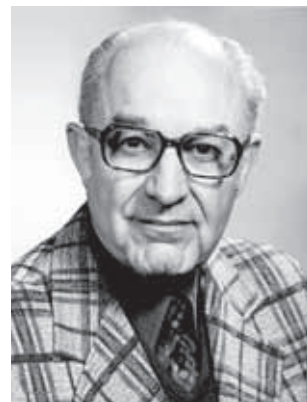
Phillip L. Cole passed away Dec. 16, 2010. He entered the U.S. Army serving as an engineer officer in an infantry division of Patton's Third Army, during the sweep across France and Germany during World War II. After the war, he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in civil engineering from Oregon State College (now University).

Cole began his career with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as development of the Columbia River Basin was just beginning and served in many interesting and challenging assignments. He was engineer-in-charge of three major dams in Oregon, and also was the resident engineer in charge of construction of Libby Dam in Montana. He retired in 1980, ending his illustrious Corps career as chief of the Engineering Division, North Pacific Division.

Cole received many awards during his Corps service, including the Meritorious Civilian Service Award and the Decoration for Exceptional Civilian Service, the highest honor given to civilians in the U.S. Department of the Army.

He was a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers, the American Society of Military Engineers, the International Commission on Large Dams and the U.S. Committee on Large Dams. Cole was inducted into the Oregon State University Hall of Fame in February 2005.

In retirement, Cole enjoyed a life of leisure on the shores of Idaho's Lake Pend Oreille. There, he enjoyed his favorite sports: downhill skiing, hunting, fishing, boating, water sports and many other outdoor activities. 




Portland District honored with CFC regional award



By Erica Jensen, Public Affairs Office

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Portland District was recognized earlier this winter with the Pacific Northwest Combined Federal Campaign's Regional Award, an honor given to only three federal agencies in the Portland area for their exceptional executive leadership support, achievement of 100 percent employee consideration, volunteer training efforts and the use of unique and creative campaign strategies and fundraising efforts.

During the 2010 CFC campaign, the District raised nearly \$97,500 exceeding its goal by more than \$20,000!

The month-long CFC took place October 2010. At District headquarters, employees enjoyed a pancake breakfast served by executive leadership, participated in an impromptu baking competition hosted by the Public Affairs Office and paraded in costume to a Halloween Party/CFC Close-Out Ceremony. Other events around Oregon included a pancake breakfast at the Construction Branch/Portland Resident Office in Troutdale, a nacho feed at Fern Ridge Dam, a 5K-run/walk at Bonneville Dam, a silent auction bake-off at The Dalles Dam and a Halloween contest at Lookout Point Dam. 

CFC REGIONAL AWARD



Photo courtesy of Oregon Federal Executive Board

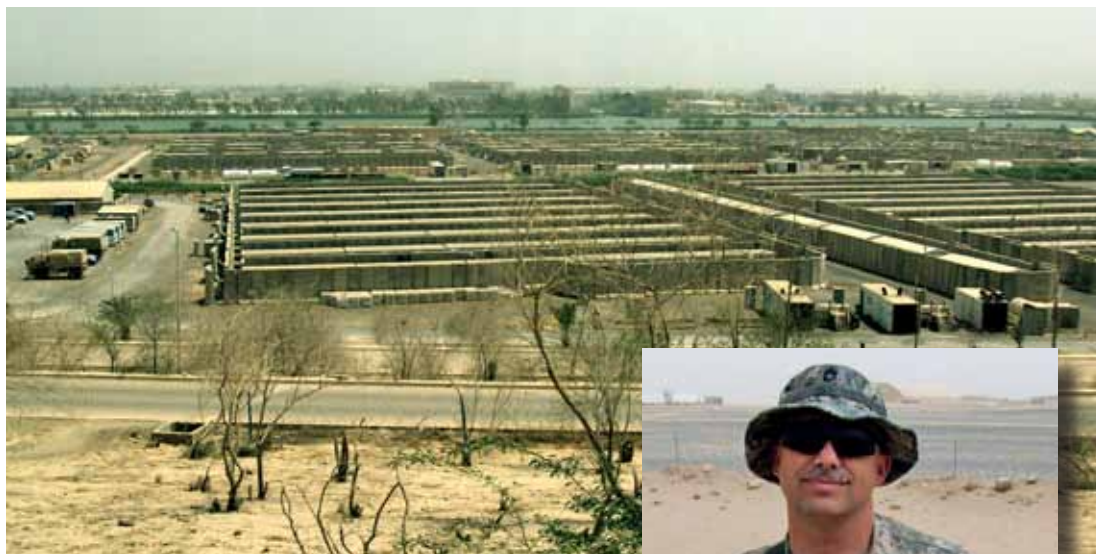
Bill Abadie, Operations Division, and Bree Brende, Hydroelectric Design Center, who served as this year's CFC chair and co-chair, accepted the Combined Federal Campaign's Regional Award on behalf of the Portland District at a CFC celebration held Jan. 11 in Portland.



NOT JUST ANOTHER “GROUNDHOG DAY”

Guardsmen's deployment recognized with Bronze Star

BRONZE STAR



By Michelle Helms, Public Affairs Office

The men and women who deploy to Iraq find themselves falling into a routine.

“People who have been over there refer to it as ‘Groundhog Day,’” said John Deschner, referring to the movie of that title, where Bill Murray relives the same day over and over again.

Wake up, dress, eat, work and relax. Repeat. While some of the smaller details vary, for the most part, every day is the same as the last.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers employee John Deschner is the Training and Education Technician for Portland District's Channels and Harbors Project. He's also Sgt. 1st Class Deschner, assistant operations sergeant for the Special Troops Battalion, 41st Brigade Combat Team in the Oregon Army National Guard.

He deployed to Iraq in May 2009, assigned to the Victory Base Complex just outside Baghdad. The complex encloses 24 square miles, is surrounded by 27 miles of perimeter walls and supports 70,000 people. The job of the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team was to keep the base secure.

Photos courtesy of John Deschner,
Channels and Harbors Project

Sgt. 1st Class John Deschner was assigned as the Operations Sergeant for the Base Defense Operations Center, Victory Base Complex, Baghdad, Iraq, as part of the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Oregon Army National Guard.

“I know my job wasn't as dangerous as some,” said Deschner. “But it wasn't easy. When patrol units came back to the base, taking for granted they would get showers, food and rest, that's because my team and I were doing our job, and doing it well.”

Deschner and his team managed the Base Defense Operations Center and were responsible for security operations, including oversight of 10 entry control points through which 40,000 people passed each day to bring in supplies and equipment for all military operations in Iraq.

During his unit's deployment, Deschner said the base was targeted in more than 100 separate mortar and rocket attacks.

“Most of the time the attacks were launched from civilian areas, so we couldn't return fire,” Deschner added.

While BDOC staff was authorized to shoot down incoming rockets and mortar, they were not allowed to return fire. Helicopter attack weapons teams were responsible for counter attacks, but had to have explicit orders from the BDOC and positive identification of the targets.

Base defense doesn't take a holiday

"They liked to attack on Sundays and holidays," said Deschner. "People are off-duty, spending time in their CHUs (Containerized Housing Units); trying to forget for a little while there's a war being fought right outside."

Deschner was on duty New Year's Eve, 2009.

"That evening we began receiving fire from locations commonly used by a particular group of insurgents," said Deschner. "They would shoot a couple rockets, then move to another neighborhood and fire a few more."

After several hours Deschner had managed to analyze the attack pattern and trained BDOC camera systems on what he believed to be the most likely position for the next attack. Shortly before midnight the team saw their attackers in a vacant field. This time they were targeting the BDOC.

"Next thing I know the radar staff is shouting 'incoming' and everyone dove under the tables," said Deschner. "But it was obvious pretty quick that we couldn't protect the base from under the desk. We could either die while hiding or die fighting back."

Deschner and his radio operator stood up and began calculating coordinates for the attack weapons team. Using the BDOC cameras, he and his commander agreed they had a positive ID and radioed the helicopters.

"We watched it all live on our screen in the BDOC," said Deschner.

Within a matter of minutes the attacks were over. Then Deschner and his team opened bottles of non-alcoholic beer . . . and rang in 2010.

"It was a little after midnight, but it didn't matter," he said. "We came through an attack, met the enemy head-on and won. It was an amazing feeling."

No more "Groundhog Days"

Following the New Years Eve incident, and for the next several months, there were no more attacks from that group's typical operating areas. Deschner and his combat team continued operating the BDOC, ensuring patrols had a safe, secure place to return to after their missions.

On Jan. 28, 2010, Sgt. 1st Class Deschner was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for exceptionally meritorious service during his deployment. But he came home in June with more than a medal. He also came home with a new perspective.


"It's not a major change," he said. "But you see things differently after you live 'Groundhog Day.' I look at each day and wonder what I can do to make it different than the day before." 



Photo by SPC Sundell, Public Affairs Specialist, Task Force Columbia

Col. Eric Bush (left), deputy brigade commander, Victory Base Complex, Baghdad, Iraq congratulates Sgt. 1st Class John Deschner (right) on being awarded the Bronze Star for exceptionally meritorious service while assigned as Battle non-commissioned officer in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He was one of 13 task force members awarded the Bronze Star.



BRONZE STAR



DISTRICT TACKLES HUGE NAVIGATION LOCK GATE REPLACEMENT

LOCK GATE REPLACEMENT

LOCK GATE REPLACEMENT

Story by Scott Clemans, Public Affairs Office

Photos by Scott Clemans; David Mackintosh, John Day Lock and Dam Project; and David Nishimura, Construction Branch

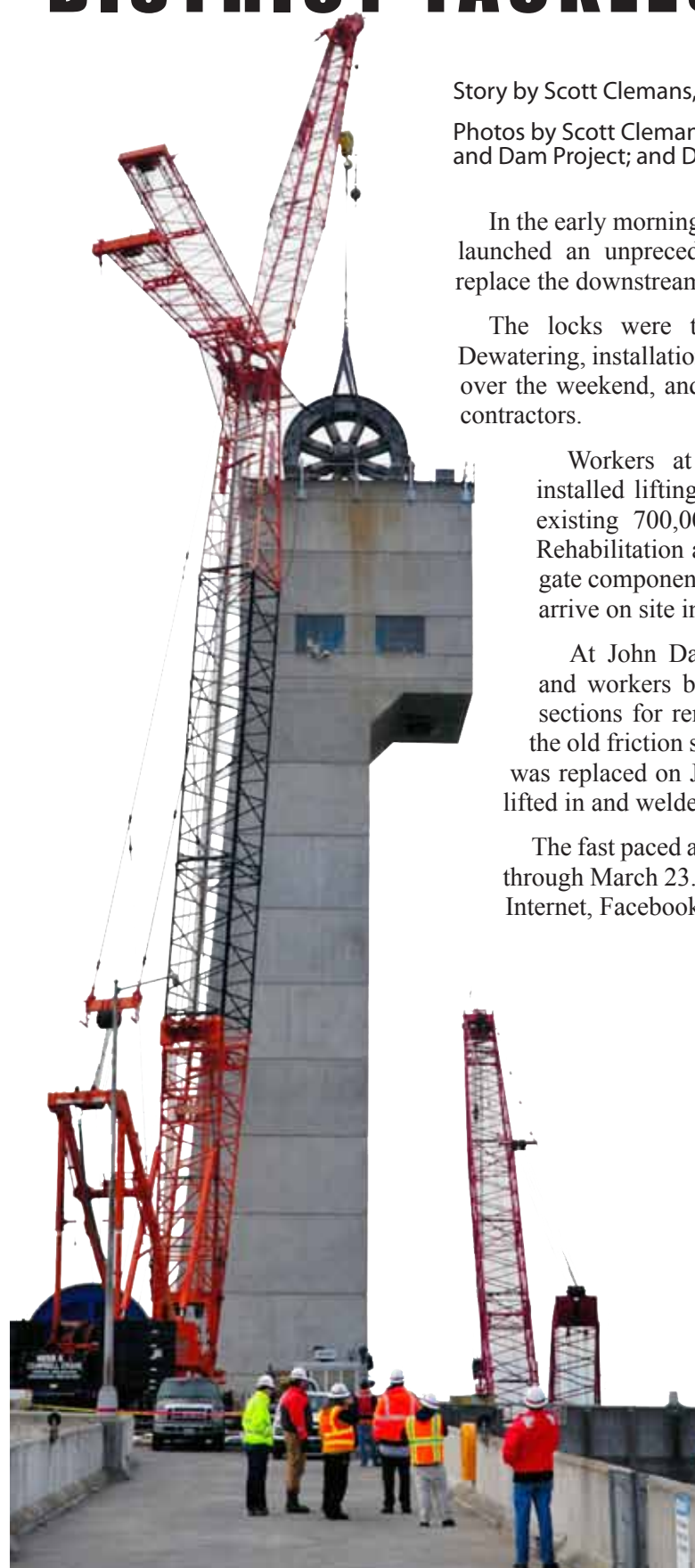
In the early morning hours of Dec. 10, 2010, Portland District launched an unprecedented 14-week, \$42 million project to replace the downstream gates at The Dalles and John Day dams.

The locks were taken out of service Friday morning. Dewatering, installation of bulkheads and fish salvage took place over the weekend, and then the locks were handed over to the contractors.

Workers at The Dalles removed lead paint and installed lifting beams and eyes, and lifted out the two existing 700,000-pound gate sections Jan. 6 and 10. Rehabilitation and repair of the concrete foundation and gate components continues; the new gate sections should arrive on site in mid-February.

At John Day, scaffolding went up around the gate and workers began cutting it into four 500,000-pound sections for removal Jan. 4-12. Workers also prepared the old friction sheaves in the towers for removal; the first was replaced on Jan. 10. The new gate sections are being lifted in and welded together now.

The fast paced and technically demanding work continues through March 23. For more information, visit the District's Internet, Facebook, Flickr, Twitter and YouTube sites.





Botanist multi-tasks to improve Willamette environment

Braves mud to kill alien plants

By Amy Echols, Public Affairs Office

Collecting plant samples from the marshes around Fern Ridge Reservoir can suck the feet right out from under you. Melissa Kirkland knows firsthand the challenge of keeping her boots on her feet when the mud gets deep.

Kirkland, a natural resource specialist at the Willamette Valley Project, is up to her knees in several wet, soggy projects to eliminate invasive plant species, restore delicate ecosystems and improve the diversity of plants and animals in the valley.

Kirkland joined the Corps four years ago to develop and direct the Willamette Valley Project's environmental stewardship geographic information system program. Merging mapping information, statistical analysis, database technology, land use history and some added detective work allows Kirkland to digitize the boundaries of stewardship projects, with goals ranging from environmental preservation and management to environmental restoration.

Lately, her work has focused on updating each project's data to improve the accuracy of boundary information. This helps guide the stewardship team through planning, budgeting and implementing about 15 active projects.

"Sometimes I have to be a detective, digging through our historical information or through original property deeds to put the story together and determine where the boundary monuments are on the ground and where the boundary really is," Kirkland explains.

Kirkland also manages several boot-sticking, on-the-ground restoration projects, aided by her own GIS work. A six-acre wetland adjacent to Dexter Reservoir was overrun by invasive



Corps of Engineers photos

Kirkland struggles through the waist-high grass and stops to retrieve her boots from the mud while collecting a special species of bladderwort for the Corps' Fern Ridge office herbarium.

blackberries and reed canary grass. These plants displaced native species, reduced biodiversity and degraded habitat and natural wetland functions. Kirkland is two years into this five-year project with the City of Lowell and Lane County.

"We designed and launched the project and we'll spend the next few years on the ground, analyzing and monitoring the recovery of this land and adapting our restoration program to ensure success," she explains.

Kirkland also likes to know how things work, not just technical tools like GIS and the natural way of plants but also in creating real results that support the

Corps' stewardship mission. "This wetland project pushed me to learn how to plan – from conception to implementation," she recalls. "I have a passion for constant learning and this is an ideal assignment for me."

"But it's invasive species that really motivate me," she states. "I've never been more motivated to kill anything in my life! I'm inspired by possibility of returning the land to its natural condition."

Eradicating or controlling the spread of "dysfunctional and insidious" plants are the central missions of Kirkland's field projects.

She channeled her conviction into Best Management Practices for the Prevention of Invasive Species, a plan that spells out the actions necessary to prevent the further spread of invasives across the system of dams and reservoirs that make up the Willamette Valley Project.

Kirkland also is working with the Bonneville Power Administration and other partners to restore national forestland under a BPA power line, along the northern shoreline of Lookout Point Reservoir. The project demonstrates the benefits of using low growing native plants in the power line corridor; this type of vegetation management can be cheaper than traditional techniques and brings ecological benefits and an improved public image.

Kat Beal, Environmental Stewardship supervisor for the Willamette Valley Project and Kirkland's supervisor, explains that Kirkland's ability to nurture partnerships has made the restoration work possible at the Dexter wetland and the BPA power line corridor.


"Melissa is an accomplished botanist, artist, naturalist and an excellent writer. This is a very useful combination of skills since effectively communicating technical information across disciplines is key to our stewardship program's



Kirkland conducts her regular photo survey from a new dike, part of the Lowell, Ore., wetlands restoration project.

success," Beal said. "She is an example of someone doing what they love and loving what they do, everyday."

In her lifetime, Kirkland hopes to see invasive plants controlled, their impact on the land diminished. She knows she's lucky to be in a position that supports this goal, even if restoring a natural system is never finished.

When asked about her career goals, she replies with certainty that she has reached them: to match up being outdoors, working with others and making good things happen from beginning to end. 



Crews plant native plants and trees under a power line near Lookout Point Reservoir as part of a restoration plan shepherded by Kirkland.



V A L L E Y E N V I R O N M E N T



Surfing the Internet leads to ho

VOLUNTEER SERVICE

A commentary by Erica Jensen,
Public Affairs Office

Photos courtesy of Habitat for
Humanity Global Village team
members, Rach Gia, Vietnam

Surfing the Internet on a Friday night can be dangerous, leading to places you never thought you'd go. For me it was a trip to Vietnam where I built homes with 13 others from around the world.

There are lots of reasons people choose to participate in volunteer trips. Some people want an "off the beaten trail" experience which allows more authentic interaction with the locals, exposure to a culture outside of tourism, have opportunities to try local cuisine, and immerse themselves into the environment of the country they are visiting. There are others who want to give back as part of a humanitarian effort, while others volunteer for spiritual reasons.

Me? I was motivated by all of those ideas.

As a Corps employee, it seemed natural for me to choose an opportunity where I would



participate in building something – even though I knew next to nothing about construction.

I chose a working vacation through Habitat for Humanity's international Global Village Program in Rach Gia, a city of around 180,000 located several hundred miles south of Saigon.

HFH's mission is to facilitate livable housing for families in need. Recipients of the program are granted low interest mortgages and also work several hundred hours of "sweat equity" as part of their agreement. Teams of volunteers work alongside families and other members of the community to construct or renovate homes under the guidance of construction supervisors.

After signing up for the program online, I was assigned to a team of 13 people who came from all parts of the world – Australia, Germany, India, Singapore and the United States. The youngest was 24 and the oldest 73. Camaraderie grew quickly among us as we traveled, lived, worked and ate together.



Mr. Ming, a construction supervisor at Habitat for Humanity's Rainbow Project commemorates the completion of road building project and other work activities performed by Global Village team members in Rach Gia, Vietnam.

me building project in Vietnam



The team spent its first week working at Rainbow Village, a collection of 36 homes in various states of construction, intended for families who had been living on a former dump site.

We painted the interiors and exteriors of homes, as well as metal grates for the windows and doors. We also built a section of road, by hauling sand, cement and gravel in wheelbarrows from the front of the project to the back – a couple hundred yards each way. We worked on metal screens which were fashioned by hand serving as rebar for the road, and mixed and poured concrete in sections completing about 50 feet of road in a week's time.



Erica Jensen, Public Affairs Office, paints walls at Rainbow Village in Rach Gia.

The team's second building project was located in the heart of the Mekong Delta about 50 kilometers from Rach Gia. To get there, we drove an hour and a half each way, everyday, then walked along a half-mile foot path through rice fields and jungle-like vegetation to our job site.

The house was called a 'love' house by HFH because all materials and construction costs had been donated by the Chevron Corporation. Phoung and Tam, along with their two kids, were the lucky beneficiaries of the house, nominated to receive it by the Vietnamese Women's Union, an 80-year-old organization that advocates for women and educates local communities on health and welfare issues.



Global Village team members start a 'love house' gifted by the Chevron Corporation for a small family in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam.

VOLUNTEER SERVICE



During the week at the second build site, we poured the home's foundation, using concrete which we hand-mixed on the ground. We transported the mixture by buckets to pour into the foundation's forms. After that, we spent our remaining time laying brick to build a septic tank, foundation walls and a porch.

To do the work, we used only a few tools, mostly hammers, giant wire cutters and old, rusty pieces of rebar with grooves cut into them. There were no power tools; everything was done by hand.

We ended our last day on the 'love' house site with a little ceremony for the family also attended by HFH's Vietnamese coordinators, members of the Vietnamese Women's Union and the local community. Before formalities began, however, Phuong came to each team member with a tray of grapes, one of which he offered as a gift for our help. It was touching to see how much our work meant to the family and to bring a little hope to their lives in the form of a decent, dry place to live.

Every day it was hot and humid, mostly in the 85 to 90 degree range. We took frequent water breaks and wore bandanas and hats to keep the sweat and sun out of our eyes.

Lunch was prepared everyday for the team by local Vietnamese women and included meat dishes (mostly chicken and duck, but also snake and field mice), vegetables and rice, served family style.


As "westerners" we were also a rare sight for the locals at both projects, but especially in the delta, where we were something of a novelty to many of the neighbors and children – some of whom had never even seen a foreigner.

HFH's Global Village Program was a perfect solution for someone like me, with no skills. They sponsor work projects all over the globe with costs averaging around \$1,500, not including airfare. This covers all in-country expenses. A portion of the fee also goes directly into the program to pay for expenses for the home.



Habitat for Humanity, Global Village team members, Rach Gia, Vietnam.

There are many types of volunteer opportunities that cover a wide variety of interests. To find yours, start by thinking about what you'd like to do, where you'd like to go, and then visit an online clearinghouse, like the website, <http://www.idealists.org/>, which lists thousands of experiences.

Or, do like I did, spend the evening surfing the Internet – but be prepared, because you might end up just like me – working thousands of miles away with others from all over the world, having the experience of your lifetime. 



Phuong and Tam with their two children worked alongside Global Village team members and were recipients of the Chevron-sponsored 'love house' in the Mekong Delta.

Retiree Spotlight



By Erica Jensen, Public Affairs Office

Mike Roll: Retiree Rookie of the Year

After 36 years with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Portland District, Mike Roll retired from his position as deputy director of the Hydroelectric Design Center in March 2010.

Nearly a year later, Roll reports that he's still retired, having spent the past months adjusting to his new lifestyle, which has already included trips to Tucson and New Orleans where he spent time with his youngest son, a PGA Class A professional golfer. An avid golfer himself, Roll plays often for fun and in tournaments. Last fall, he helped coordinate and played on the Portland District's Corps Castle Cup team, beating both the Walla Walla and Seattle districts.

Another important part of his new life includes volunteer work. Roll has taken on three opportunities: He mentors young athletes in the Columbia Edgewater Junior Golf Program; is an active associate on the USAgencies Credit Union Board; and is a member on Kaiser Permanente's Patient Advisory Committee.

In his remaining time, Roll works part-time for Brown and Caldwell, a water resources engineering firm in Portland.



Photo courtesy of Mike Roll

Mike Roll (right), with wife Sylvia and son Brandon, on the golf course in New Orleans.

"I highly recommend retirement...everyone should get one as soon as they can," chuckled Roll.

In short, Mike Roll may have retired – but he still works full-time, it's just on a new set of interests.

Do you have a story to share?

If you have a story about your life since leaving the Portland District, we'd like to hear from you directly (when you left the Corps and what you've been up to since). Just send an e-mail addressing the points below to cenwp-pa@usace.army.mil, along with a high resolution photo that you'd like to share.

- Name
- City and state where you live now
- How many years were you with the Corps
- Post-retirement career experiences
- Tell us about your travels
- Tell us about your hobbies
- Tell us about your family
- Tell us about your volunteer efforts
- Other interests of note to employees

If your story is selected for an upcoming issue, a member of the Public Affairs Office may contact you with questions or for more details. If you have questions, e-mail cenwp-pa@usace.army.mil or call 503-808-4510.

RETIREE SPOTLIGHT



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

A Day On, Not a Day Off!

By Mary Bretz, Equal Employment Opportunity Office

On an April evening in 1968, the voice of the Civil Rights Movement, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was silenced forever. It is ironic that a man who studied the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi and a proponent of non-violence should meet such a violent death. Although no longer with us, his legacy lives on as the nation celebrated his birthday in January as a national holiday and day of service.

Shortly after King's death, Congressman John Conyers, Jr. of Michigan proposed legislation to make Dr. King's birthday, January 15, a federal holiday. In 1971 the Southern Christian Leadership Conference submitted a petition to Congress with more than 3 million signatures in support of the King holiday. Eight years later, in 1979, President Jimmy Carter offered his support of the legislation. The bill was defeated by only five votes in November 1979, even though Dr. King's widow, Coretta Scott King, testified before Congressional hearings.

Undaunted, Mrs. King continued to gather support nationwide including singer Stevie Wonder who penned the song "Happy Birthday" as a tribute to Martin Luther King. Wonder also accompanied Mrs. King when she presented a second petition to Congress in 1980 – this time with 6 million signatures. The bill passed in the House with a vote of 338 - 90.

In the Senate, opposition was led by Sen. Jesse Helms of North Carolina. His attempts to discredit Dr. King included reading a paper entitled *Martin Luther King, Jr.: Political Activities and Associations*, and presenting a 300-page document detailing Dr. King's communist associations and requesting the Federal Bureau of Investigation to release its surveillance tapes of Dr. King, later denied by District Judge John Lewis Smith, Jr.

After the bill passed the Senate and was signed into law by President Ronald Reagan on Nov. 2, 1983, Dr. King's widow stated, "This is not a black holiday; it is a people's holiday."



Photo courtesy of U.S. National Archives

President Ronald Reagan at the signing ceremony, Nov. 2, 1983, designating Martin Luther King Holiday legislation.

The holiday was first officially celebrated Jan. 18, 1986, by 27 states and the District of Columbia. In 2000, South Carolina became the last state to sign a bill recognizing Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day as a paid holiday.

To honor Dr. King's dream of freedom and justice for all and his challenge to do something for others, Pennsylvania Senator Harris Wofford and Georgia Congressman John Lewis drafted the King Holiday and Service Act designating Martin Luther King, Jr. Day as a national day of service. President Bill Clinton signed the bill into law on Aug. 23, 1994.

In the 25 years since it was first celebrated, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day has evolved from just a day off to a day on of community service as the Nation works together to achieve Dr. King's vision of a "Beloved Community."

The King Center (<http://www.thekingcenter.org/>)

Association for the Study of African American Life and History (<http://www.asalh.org/>)

Corporation for National and Community Service (<http://mlkday.gov/about/serveonkingday.php>)